DO RAINBOW LORIKEETS EVICT BATS?

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On 28 November 1997 I found three dead Gould's Wattled Bats (*Chalinolobus gouldii*) at a sports oval in the Perth suburb of Girrawheen. They were within three metres of one another, under a large Jarrah tree (*Eucalyptus marginata*) which was growing at the edge of the grassed area of the oval. Two were on fresh, green, mowed grass and one was caught up in the leaves of a grass tree (*Xanthorrhoea preissii*), about 0.5 m above the ground. All soft tissues had disappeared but most of the skin remained although it had ruptured in places, particularly on the abdomen. The body cavities contained organic soil-like particles. It appeared that the bats had died elsewhere and their bodies had remained in a sheltered place for a long time.

All three bats were juveniles with incompletely ossified phalangeal joints. Their forearms measured 35 (2) and 36 (1) mm which suggests that they may not have been able to fly as adults have forearms of 40–48 (mean 44) mm (Dixon 1995). Although the soft tissues had decomposed, the wings and legs were intact and none had any broken limb bones. However all three had crushed skulls.

While I was there, a Rainbow Lorikeet (*Trichoglossus haematodus*) emerged from a hollow branch directly above the area where the bats were found and flew off with another that had been in the tree. Rainbow Lorikeets nest in tree hollows. They are not indigenous to south-western Australia but they have spread through most of metropolitan Perth since their introduction in the 1960s. They are aggressive and have been recorded evicting other birds from nest hollows (Lamont and Burbidge 1996, David Lamont personal communication).

Gould's Wattled Bats usually roost in tree hollows. In south-western WA, they give birth from late November or early December to mid-January (Kitchener 1975) and take about six weeks to reach adult appearance (Dixon 1995). It is improbable that these bats had been killed recently by the lorikeets. A more likely scenario is that the young bats died in the maternity roost, a hollow branch, in early 1997 and their bodies remained there until the lorikeets cleaned out the hollow nearly a year later. Their cause of death remains unknown but it seems likely that the lorikeets had taken over a tree hollow which a colony

of Gould's Wattled Bats used for a maternity roost.

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